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Marxism on the wane?

Where have all the Marxists gone?

Long time passing.

Where have all the Marxists gone?

Long time ago.

Where have all the Marxists gone?

Gone to graveyards everyone.

When will they ever learn?

Professor F.A. Hayek recently told the story of dining in his London club with an English-speaking Russian scientist who had come to Western Europe for the first time to attend a scientific conference. Mr. Hayek asked the Russian what surprised him most in Western Europe. The Russian's answer was: "You still have so many Marxists; we haven't any."

Meanwhile the debate grows among Marxists and non-Marxists alike as to the significance of Communist China's hesitant "criticism" of Marxism-Leninism early in December.

What is not a matter of debate, however, is that the flight from Marxism-Leninism is a worldwide phenomenon; everywhere, that is, except among American academics, the liberation theologians in the United States and Central America, the Central Committee of the U.S.S.R., the Marxist-Leninist madmen in Ethiopia, Southeast Asia, and Latin American, and Michael Harrington, Marxism's Gen. Custer.

Those who follow the Soviet, East European, and Chinese press and agit-prop journals know that they are full of warnings against the "ideological shortcomings," "lack of commitment," and "negative phenomena" to be found among party members.

In Eastern Europe, one can say, even without the benefit of a public opinion poll, that Marxism, as an

ideology, is extinct; nobody, not even the leaders, believe in its dogmas or act according to its prescriptions.

Few, if any, Marxists of intellectual prowess are to be found in Western Europe today. As for Marxism-Leninism, even the once-powerful Communist parties of France and Italy no longer boast publicly about their Leninist loyalties and credentials. In short, we have come to "the end of ideology," at least as far as Marxism-Leninism is concerned.

Not even the Chinese Communists, long the most ultra-orthodox of the left and the focus of admiration among young American revolutionaries who called themselves "Maoists," dare any longer publicly embrace this evil dogma.

Its application over 66 years has meant the destruction of millions and millions of human beings on three continents at the behest of provable psychopaths like Stalin, Mao Tse-tung, Pol Pot, and Ho Chi Minh, and borderline cases like Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, Sekou Touré, Muammar Qaddafi, and other terrorist-statesmen so beloved by Western Marxist apologists.

Yet as long as the Soviet Union acts as reliquary, Marxism-Leninism, however meaningless its content, will have an altar for the sanctification of its dogmas. And that sanctification is what keeps the last remaining Marxists in the Free World from surrendering their cherished illusions. For to be a Marxist-Leninist today means that you accept the horrors of communism as both temporary, necessary, and inevitable concomitants on the road to the utopia that never comes.

It means that you regard not the Soviet Union but the United States as the enemy of mankind. It means you ignore the existence of the KGB while denouncing the existence of the CIA and the FBI. It means ignoring the true meaning of Marxism-Leninism, symbolized by the 23-year-old Berlin Wall. It means that you regard democracy's faults as irremediably systemic while indulging Marxism-Leninism's faults as episodic, occasionally offering a ritualistic criticism of the Soviet Union following something like the shooting down of the Korean airliner. (Then, of course, you temper even that criticism by suggesting it might just be possible that the CIA engineered the whole tragedy.)

To be a Marxist today means telling lies and, if you are a college professor, it means lying to your students by selling Marxism as "scientific socialism." It means ignoring the words of Milovan Djilas, who said recently that "the Western system, as it is, is a better system. . . . It is more human. In the West you have everything you have in the East and you have something more: Political freedoms and greater possibilities. In every way [the Western system] is better." Not perfect; better.

In short, the Marxists among us, the decent ones who are genuinely stricken by the undeniable horrors of Marxist-Leninist praxis, still believe that they have found in Marxism the universal key to all history, the perfect system which has the power to explain all phenomena. For them, Marxism is their culture, their morality, their art, life itself. Arthur Koestler once wrote about their "intellectual estrangement from reality."

"Having lost touch with reality," he wrote, "they have acquired a devilish art. They can prove everything they believe and believe everything they can prove."

The flight from Marxism-Leninism has brought to a close the weird era which Paul Johnson has characterized as the collectivist 1970s.

The 1980s are the anti-collectivist, pro-capitalist 1980s. "Social engineering" is no longer an acceptable euphemism for genocide.

Whether or not Deng Xiaoping and his comrades mean it when they hint that Marxism-Leninism is not terribly useful in the attempt to modernize Chinese society, the point is that they had to say what they did. If they hadn't, Hong Kong would swiftly become a desert, and China would sink back into the quagmire of Mao's Cultural Revolution.

Slowly the era of Marxism-Leninism draws to a close. Only the Soviet Union keeps this inhuman dogma alive as part of its weapons arsenal. While Marxism-Leninism, whose real name is Gulagism, lives in the U.S.S.R., peace and freedom will always hang in the balance.

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